

US 64 - NC 49 Corridor Study
(Raleigh to Statesville and Raleigh to Charlotte)

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SUMMARY REPORT

Prepared for



North Carolina Department of Transportation
Transportation Planning Branch

Prepared by



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US 64 - NC 49 Corridor Study Stakeholder Interviews Summary Report

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the Public Involvement Program for the US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study is to identify and involve stakeholders who have an interest in shaping the future vision of the US 64 and NC 49 corridors and/or who may be impacted by future corridor improvements. As part of the Public Involvement Program, stakeholder interviews were conducted as one of the project's first outreach activities. The intent of these interviews was to ensure that study recommendations are sensitive to the vision of and adequately address issues raised by corridor stakeholders.

The stakeholder interviews were designed to:

- Gather critical information on potential concerns, opinions, and issues of targeted groups.
- Obtain feedback on potential study options.
- Establish connections with key individuals and groups.
- Identify key issues, opportunities, and concerns related to US 64 – NC 49 study options.
- Identify additional groups/individuals that should be made aware of and/or involved in the process.

These interviews provided an opportunity to assess initial perceptions and opinions from a sample of key stakeholders along the corridor. Such stakeholders will play a key role in subsequent phases of the planning process for this corridor.

2 Process Overview

The following sections describe the steps used in developing and conducting the stakeholder interviews.

2.1 Participant Selection

At the corridor study's initiation, five "public involvement cells" were delineated based on unique characteristics, including land use and existing travel conditions along the corridors. This aided the Study Team in identifying participants who could represent a spectrum of issues likely to exist in areas across the extensive 200-mile corridor study area. The Study Team solicited the aid of the Study's Corridor Development Team (CDT) in the selection of participants.

An initial list of stakeholder interest categories was presented for review, comment and finalization at the November 12, 2003 CDT meeting. The intent was to provide a reasonable representation of varying interests along the corridor. NCDOT staff and/or CDT members recommended participants based on their particular insight or knowledge. Specifically, they were selected because:

- They represent a specific geographic region.
- Their knowledge or responsibility to a specific mode or environmental, social, or community issue.
- Their stature in the community.
- They represent traditionally underrepresented populations.

Appendix A provides the list of stakeholder participants. Represented organizations and individuals included elected officials, environmental organizations, community leaders, chambers of commerce/business owner(s), and major employers.

The list, which was structured by the anticipated interests within each public involvement cell, included names identified by the Study Team as potentially significant stakeholders. At the CDT meeting, CDT members reviewed and revised the listing of prospective stakeholder participants based on their knowledge of key leaders in their respective communities.

2.2 Participant Contact

Recommended stakeholder interview participants were contacted by letter to invite them to participate in interviews (see **Appendix B** for sample of invitation letter). These letters were followed up with a telephone call to answer any questions and schedule the interview. Following interview scheduling, a telephone call was made to confirm the interview date, time, and location.

2.3 Interviews

A total of twenty stakeholder interviews were conducted during a six-week period between January and February of 2004. Four interviews were conducted in each of the five general areas contained within the public involvement cells. The format of the interview was one-on-one sessions (except for two interviews with a request for an additional participant). Two members of the study team attended each interview, with one conducting the actual interview, and the other documenting key issues. Participants were introduced to the study, including the background of the NCDOT Strategic Corridors Concept, study goal and objectives, study process and schedule, and contact information.

Interviewees were informed that specific questions would be posed to engage and encourage feedback. Participants were generally posed the same questions, with some flexibility based on the interests and concerns of each stakeholder. Questions were focused on the following topics:

- Existing conditions (including safety and mobility)
- Future conditions
- Environmental challenges and concerns
- Study options

The interview script and questions are included in **Appendix C**.

2.4 Follow-up

An abstract was drafted following each interview to document participant feedback. The abstracts were sent to interview participants for their review and approval. Individual interview abstracts are included in **Appendix D**.

3 Summary of Findings

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Nearly all interview participants were familiar with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Strategic Corridors Concept and the significance of US 64 and NC 49 in this planning initiative. There were key issues that emerged with regard to the perception of existing and future corridor conditions, as well as key issues confronting planning along the corridor. Feedback was similar among participants within each delineated public involvement cell. The following sections provide an overview of the input gathered from interview participants. Individual interview abstracts are included in **Appendix D**.

3.1 Perception of Corridor Conditions

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

Nearly all participants agreed that an increasing number of people are using both corridors for long distance travel. Participants agreed that the corridors are heavily used for local, commuting, and trucking travelers. Furthermore, most of the participants stated that the county or municipality they lived in or represented serves as a "bedroom community" to these regional commuters.

Although nearly all participants have noticed an increase in traffic on the corridors, not all said that this contributes to existing safety or mobility problems in their respective areas. A few general comments were made about high-speed travelers in areas of the corridors, including US 64 through Chatham County. A few participants were certain that existing safety and mobility issues on the corridors can be attributed to truck conflicts, narrow and winding sections, and numerous driveways.

Some participants identified existing "hot spots" in their respective areas. The following specific needs were identified as being critical to stakeholders interviewed:

- US 64/US 1 in Wake County was identified as an intersection that needs improvements.
- US 64 in Davie County (Mocksville) has major safety issues associated with heavy truck and vehicle conflicts.

- US 64 through Asheboro is heavily congested.
- Siler City has local and through traffic conflicts.
- NC 49/NC 8 intersection was identified as "dangerous."
- NC 49 intersection with Roberta Road deteriorates mobility through Harrisburg.
- US 64 was noted as being "dangerous" between Lexington and I-85.
- NC 49 through Mount Pleasant has a school bus route along the corridor, raising safety concerns for school kids.

Two participants in Chatham County noted that there is an increase in traffic as well as accidents along US 64 through Chatham County. One of these participants said that he and others often wonder "where are all of these people coming from"?

3.1.2 Future Conditions

While most participants stated that development in the region is inevitable, there were differences in the nature of this desired growth. Nearly all participants noted that they are looking to expand their employment opportunities outside of manufacturing, including trying to attract larger companies. Nearly all participants stated that US 64 (NC 49 in the case of Harrisburg and Mount Pleasant) is a vital corridor for their future growth plans. While most of the participants said that areas along the corridor will continue to serve as "bedroom communities" for regional commuters, some participants would like to see their county or municipality as self-supporting with a mixture of residential and commercial/service growth available to encourage tax revenue.

Stakeholders in Davie County noted that the County is growing at a fast pace and that they are seeking to expand its commercial and industrial land uses. Overall, Chatham County wants to expand its residential and industrial base, and will probably have diversified growth given, as one participant noted, "the non-uniform variation in employment and demographic trends in different areas of the County."

Randolph County, especially the Asheboro area, has a desire to expand its commercial and service base because it is situated in the center of the state and is in close proximity to and between two major activity centers. Two participants noted that Asheboro is a growth "hot spot" due to this ideal location and because it houses the NC Zoo, which has expansion plans during the next ten+ years. These plans are expected to attract "between 750,000 to one million tourists per year." Klaussner Furniture, which provides a mixture of manufacturing and retail jobs, is the largest employer in Randolph County. Klaussner operates approximately 350 trucks on the US 64 and NC 49 corridors daily, and has plans to expand its distribution center (located on US 220 Business) by 115,000 square feet.

Davidson County is looking to expand its tourism industry by emphasizing and marketing their unique attractions, including the ever-popular BBQ in Lexington, restoring old farms and other cultural/historic sites, Ms. Hanes cookie factory, and various museums and art galleries. Statesville wishes to grow its commercial and residential base. Growth in the Mount Pleasant

area of Cabarrus County is anticipated to consist mostly of business and retail establishments to support its "bedroom community."

A few participants noted a strong desire to see the central region of the state become a major player in the tourism/recreational and cultural/historic destination. Although the region already possesses these features (i.e. Badin Lake, Seagrove Pottery, Uwharrie National Forest, Asheboro Zoo, Jordan Lake, etc.), there is a strong desire to promote the concept of the area as a distinct region in terms of its geographic and economic significance. The Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project, also known as the "Central Park Project," seeks to take advantage of the area spanning Charlotte to Raleigh/Durham. The plan is to protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the region, while expanding the economic base by using these resources for "sustainable tourism" and recreation development. The idea is not to replace existing industries, but to supplement them with this type of tourism as a major economic industry for the region. The idea is to generate lifestyle jobs that attract hospitality resources for overnight visitors, not just day visitors.

Several participants indicated their desire for annexation in the upcoming years. For example, Apex expects to see their Town limits expanded to border somewhere around Jordan Lake, as that is the only area where Apex has available land to grow. This growth will consist of "conservative residential development and quality commercial and mixed growth development."

Three participants, representing Chatham County, the Haw River Assembly, and the Sierra Club, anticipate that planned improvements to US 15/501 and US 421, both which connect to US 64, will also drive growth in the region.

3.2 Environmental Concerns and Challenges

Several participants identified water quality in the region as important. One participant, representing the Haw River Assembly, noted that erosion and sedimentation impacts to water bodies/creeks/feeder streams are something that should be avoided in any study option. This participant said that this was an issue in the construction of the Pittsboro Bypass. Water bodies that were identified by participants as a special concern in the region include: Rocky River, Uwharrie River, Haw River, Badin Lake, and Jordan Lake.

Air quality came up as an issue for Davidson County and Statesville. The two participants acknowledged that air quality is a regional issue that has expanded outward from adjacent metropolitan areas. One participant noted that the Charlotte area air quality monitoring system that includes Statesville/Iredell County indicates significant air quality issues for the area.

Two participants noted significant historical significance within their respective areas. Davie County is rich in history, with three historic districts in Mocksville alone. Mount Pleasant, which is located along NC 49 in Cabarrus County, also has a historic district. One participant felt strongly that transportation improvements are a "catalyst for sprawl" and pose overall environmental concerns for the state's natural resources.

3.3 Feedback on Study Options

Nearly all participants agreed that the US 64 corridor should be improved to a high-speed facility with limited or full control of access. Many participants felt that the corridor should be upgraded to a full access control facility, although they acknowledged that they had mixed feelings about the potential impacts of this facility type (including a bypass) on smaller towns, including Ramseur and Richfield.

A few participants favored a bypass for their long-term needs, as they felt it will be needed to improve mobility through their respective city/town. For example, participants in Asheboro consider the planned bypass as a welcome improvement. Participants in Pittsboro (as well as other participants) agreed that the bypass has helped the historic downtown area by alleviating truck and vehicle conflicts in the area and by taking a significant amount of through traffic out of the central business district. Several participants noted that they liked the visual quality of the Pittsboro Bypass.

Two participants indicated that a bypass facility was at one time or is currently in their respective *Thoroughfare Plans*. Harrisburg had a NC 49 bypass in their plan in the 1990's, however, this project was removed in a subsequent update due to lack of priority. Mocksville has a US 64 Bypass (TIP R-3111) in their plan.

Two participants, representing Apex and Cary, were opposed to major improvements to the US 64 corridor. The participant from Apex felt strongly that "upgrading the roadway would have negative impacts on existing commercial and residential development along the corridor through the Apex area". These participants felt a full control access facility would prevent them from realizing the corridor as the "urban arterial" and new "central business district for Apex." These participants suggested that consideration be given to leaving the section of US 64 from I-540 to US 1 as is with no additional control of access.

The participant representing the Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club said that the Interstate and corridor(s) are sufficient, and that the Department should only recommend minor safety improvements, including "adding turn lanes at strategic locations." This participant also said that "buffer areas should be purchased along both sides of the roadway...through purchasing development rights..." as a means to control access rather than constructing any new roads with access control. He felt that widening roads makes rural areas "look just like everywhere else and robs these areas of their character."

The participant representing the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project (Central Park) noted "The potential significance of implementing the Central Park strategy should be a factor that is considered when DOT acts within this region...and constructing appropriate roads for our region may be more expensive, but the quantified economic benefit of such development should be considered." This participant has strong feelings about protecting the "view shed" because maintaining the "visual integrity" in this region would be critical for implementing the "Central Park" strategy.

APPENDIX A

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS LIST

FINAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS LIST

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CELL #1

- Tommy Emerson, Chair, Chatham County Board of Commissioners
- Elaine Chiosso, Executive Director, Haw River Assembly
- Keith Weatherly, Mayor, Town of Apex
- Keith Elkes, Leith Management

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CELL #2

- John Grimes, Mayor Pro-Tem, Town of Siler City
- Robert Porter, Chair, Sierra Club, Orange-Chatham Group
- Tony Tucker, Director, Chatham County Economic Development Corporation
- Father Michael Lorentsen, Pastor, Saint Julia Catholic Church

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CELL #3

- Talmadge Baker, Asheboro City Council
- Mary Joan Pugh, Business Officer, NC Zoological Park
- George Gusler, Jr., Executive Vice-President, Asheboro/Randolph Chamber of Commerce
- Jerry Holder, Vice President of Operations, Klaussner Furniture

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CELL #4

- Richard Poindexter, Chair, Davie County Board of Commissioners
- Bill Medlin, Director, Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project
- Billy Joe Kepley, Davidson County Board of Commissioners
- Danny Hearn, President, Statesville Chamber of Commerce

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CELL #5

- Troy Barnhardt, Mayor, Town of Mt. Pleasant
- Tyrel Moore, Planning Board Chair, Town of Harrisburg
- Michael Sandy, Planning Director, Stanly County Planning/Zoning Department
- Tom Horner, District Ranger, Uwharrie National Forest

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE INTERVIEW INVITATION LETTER



STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL F. EASLEY
GOVERNOR

LYNDO TIPPETT
SECRETARY

November 26, 2003

Name
Address 1
Address 2

SUBJECT: US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

Dear XXXX,

The North Carolina Department of Transportation recently began a study to identify long-range improvements for the US 64 and NC 49 corridors between Raleigh and Charlotte and Raleigh and Statesville. To ensure that the resulting “master plans” for these vital corridors consider community visions and needs, we are conducting interviews with key corridor stakeholders. These selected stakeholders represent a variety of interests -- corporate, environmental and community. We are asking you to be one of our interview participants.

Your in-person interview will be scheduled at your convenience, held at your office or other location of your choice, and will take less than an hour of your time. Interview questions will cover a variety of topics relating to your perception of corridor mobility challenges, as well as strategies being considered to improve intrastate passenger and freight mobility.

We will be contacting you within the next few days to set up a convenient time for your interview. Study recommendations will be based in part on the information we gather through these interviews, so we hope you will agree to participate in this important information gathering activity. In preparation for this interview, I have enclosed a brochure describing this important study. If you have any additional questions, please contact me at (919) 715-5482 ext. 380.

Sincerely,

David Wasserman
Project Manager
US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

Cc: Lori Cove – NCDOT
John Adams – PBS&J

MAILING ADDRESS:
NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
STATEWIDE PLANNING
1554 MAIL SERVICE CENTER
RALEIGH NC 27699-1554

TELEPHONE: 919-733-4705
FAX: 919-733-2417
WEBSITE: WWW.DOT.STATE.NC.US

LOCATION:
TRANSPORTATION BUILDING
1 SOUTH WILMINGTON STREET
RALEIGH NC

APPENDIX C

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS SCRIPT

US 64 – NC 49 CORRIDOR STUDY

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SCRIPT OUTLINE

Interview participant: _____

Interview conducted/attended by: _____

Interview date: _____

Introduction

- **Review Study Purpose, Process and Timeline**
 - Brief overview of Strategic Corridors Concept and how US 64 and NC 49 fits in this planning initiative.
 - Develop a long-term consensus-driven vision for improving vehicle and freight movement along US 64 and NC 49
 - Tiered study approach. Describe Tier 1 actions and outcomes / Tier 2 actions and outcomes
 - Utilize a Corridor Development Team for ongoing Study oversight

- **Purpose of Interviews**
 - Document perceptions about transportation conditions on the subject corridor(s), their needs regarding travel to work, school, shopping and other essential local, regional, and intrastate destinations
 - Gather initial feedback on the improvements being considered for the corridors
 - Gather information on future development plans
 - Document new options that should be considered by the NCDOT

- **Follow-up to Interview Process**
 - Interview participant will be sent a written summary of the interview for review and approval
 - Approved summary will become part of the project document

Perception of Existing and Future Corridor Mobility Conditions

1. Do you perceive any safety or mobility problems along the corridor? (show map of corridor). Please specify.
2. What do you think causes these mobility and safety problems?
3. What plans does your organization have for the coming years that could shape recommendations to improve safety and mobility along the corridor(s)?
4. How is the corridor used by you, your group, and/or your community?
5. How important is the corridor to the daily work and social life of you, your group, and/or your community?
6. How do you think your area will grow/change in the next 25 years? 50 years? How will the US 64 – NC 49 corridor play a role in these changes?
7. Are there any environmentally-related challenges in your area? Are there existing problems with air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat, forests, etc.?
8. Do you anticipate future environmental problems in your area of the corridor? What will cause these problems?
9. Are there ways improvements to the US 64-NC 49 corridor can solve or prevent these environmental problems?

Feedback on Study Options

The Study will be analyzing a variety of options to improve regional mobility and access along the corridor. We'd like to review these options with you and get your feedback.

- Existing plus TIP improvements (show map)
- At-grade Expressway (signal free)
 - Describe/Provide example
- Full Control Access Freeway
 - Describe/Provide example

Other Suggestions/Observations

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW ABSTRACTS

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

BILL MEDLIN, Director, Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project
Troy

Mr. Medlin began with a description of the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project. The Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes region is located in the Piedmont of North Carolina, and consists of the following seven counties: Anson, Davidson, Montgomery, Randolph, Richmond, Rowan, and Stanly. The Project was initiated approximately 12 years ago as a nonprofit organization to develop and promote the concept of the area as a distinct region. Recognizing the geographic and economic significance of the region, the goal of the Project is to "provide a foundation for sound economic growth while maintaining the environmental integrity of the area."

Elements of the Project focus on environmental management, "responsible economic growth, and natural resource tourism development strategies." The Project, also known as the "Central Park Project," seeks to take advantage of the growing urban area spanning from Charlotte to Raleigh/Durham.

The mission statement of the Project is to proactively "promote and support efforts that balance economic development and environmental management in the Uwharrie Lakes Region". This area is characterized by a chain of lakes, open farmland, ancient mountains, forests and winding scenic lanes. The Project seeks to protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the region while expanding the economic base by using these resources for sustainable tourism and recreation development. The idea is not to replace existing industries, but to supplement them with sustainable recreation and tourism as a major economic industry for the region.

According to documentation provided by Mr. Medlin, the Project is focusing its resources in the following areas:

- 1) Identifying assets, preserving them, and encouraging sensitive planning and development around them
- 2) Regional recreation and tourism infrastructure development-encouraging networking and getting the region ready for visitors
- 3) Initial marketing and packaging and the creation of the local pilot "experiences"
- 4) Small business development around these needs

The Project is a long-term vision combined with immediate and planned investments in the region, particularly in northern counties of the region that are immediately undergoing and will continue to be vulnerable to urban and rural development.

Some of the existing attractions in the region include: Badin Lake Recreational Area, High Rock, Lake Tillery, Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge, the NC Zoo, and Seagrove Pottery. Significant projects planned include the Village of Misenheimer/Pfeiffer University cycling center, which will attract the large population of cycling enthusiasts in the region. Another project is known as *Chautauqua* in Badin, which will somewhat emulate the western NY Chautauqua. Other projects include possible use of freight lines (around Aberdeen) for dining/lodging and other projects slated for the Ansonville and Ellerbe areas.

It is anticipated that the Project will generate "lifestyle jobs". The idea is to attract hospitality resources to attract overnight visitors, not just day visitors.

Feedback on Corridor Conditions/Study Options

"The "Central Park" strategy for economic development within our region is potentially large - at a minimum it will provide \$2.1 billion of direct economic impact and almost 33,000 jobs that will pay wages above the current average per capita income levels in our region. The potential significance of implementing this strategy should be a factor that is considered when DOT acts within this region. Constructing appropriate roads for our region may be more expensive but the quantified economic benefit of such development should be considered."

"The section of US 64 that is of extremely poor quality and represents an example of the worst that could happen to our corridors is the section from Lexington to I-85. The section of US 64 as it enters Randolph County is of particular importance to us. Just inside the Randolph County line one tops a hill and suddenly is greeted by a panoramic scene in which one sees several peaks of the Uwharrie Mountains and an expanse of a valley that is still largely open farm land and hardwood forests. This scene typifies what the visitors in the surrounding urban crescent are looking for. As this section of US 64 is developed it is critical that the view shed be maintained. The same can be said for NC 49 from Asheboro through Stanly County."

"Visual integrity and scenic protection is key to implementing the "Central Park" strategy. In a consumer market study we commissioned Appalachian State University to do in 1999 the top three responses by the households that were surveyed in the urban crescent surrounding us (Charlotte to Raleigh) were (1) scenic natural areas - 79%, (2) driving/sightseeing - 66%, and

(3) nature walks - 66%. Not only should the type of construction maintain the scenic qualities that we are trying to develop but they should be constructed in a manner that they do not encourage development that would depreciate the scenic view shed. If we are to attract the 3.5 million, soon to be 5 million, residents of the surrounding urban crescent to visit our area we must maintain, and improve where possible, the scenic quality of our region. If the view shed is impeded or degraded along our major arteries we will lose the principle assets that we have and will lose the ability to sustainably redevelop our regional economy."

Mr. Medlin sees the importance of the corridors to the Project's existing and future endeavors. He would like to see the seven-county area as a destination, not populated with "drive-by businesses". He would like to see the corridors stay as scenic as possible. He cited the Pittsboro bypass as a good example of a high speed facility that has aesthetic value. Mr. Medlin would like to see bicycle provisions in any alternative.

An example of the NC 49 importance to the goal of the Project is the Birkhead Wilderness area, which Mr. Medlin and others want to treat as the northern gateway to the Uwharries. The northern tip of the National Forest is near NC 49.

In the region there is a great deal of farmland where the majority of owners are older than 55 years old. Mr. Medlin said that not many of these farmers have an "exit strategy" and that there will be pressure (especially from the Charlotte region) for these areas to develop. Anson, Richmond, and Montgomery counties are characterized by high unemployment rates, and could greatly benefit from the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project. Stanly County is currently having internal conflicts with growth.

Mr. Medlin says that an option for the NC 49 corridor could be like that of New York's Hudson Parkway, which is interstate quality, but biker-friendly. He does not like the character of US 64 from Lexington to Asheboro, where there is significant roadside development.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Billy Joe Kepley, Davidson County Commissioner
Lexington

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Commissioner Kepley uses US 64 to travel to Raleigh and thinks it would be a good alternative to I-40 as a hurricane evacuation route. Commissioner Kepley also noted that I-40 needs traffic relief.

Commissioner Kepley said that he knew of no safety or mobility issues to speak of. He stated that even with only 2 lanes, he feels safer on US 64 than on I-40. Commissioner Kepley feels US 64 from Lexington to Asheboro is straight, well-graded, and has done a good job serving the traffic that travels on it.

Commissioner Kepley noted that once in Asheboro, travel on US 64 slows due to increased traffic and development.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

According to Commissioner Kepley, 45 percent (approximately 25, 000 people) of the workforce commutes outside of Davidson County. Most commute to Guilford County and others commute to Forsyth County. The number of people who commute to Randolph County are balanced by the number of people who commute from Randolph County to Davidson County. According to Commissioner Kepley, people prefer to travel on US 64, but may choose I-40 to avoid passing through towns. Commissioner Kepley wants to see priority placed on safety and expediting transportation for commuters.

Commissioner Kepley expects to see significant development in the Davidson County area. Commissioner Kepley is attempting to enhance and market various tourist attractions throughout Lexington and Davidson County. These attractions include:

- Lexington barbeque (the barbeque festival)
- Old Mill Farm (Commissioner Kepley and others are trying to restore)
- Boone's Cave (this park was given to the County by the State and is being renovated and adding 200 acres)
- Old Yadkin College site
- Vietnam Memorial
- Ms. Hanes cookie factory
- Denton Farm Park (there are 3 major festivals there every year)
- Old Spach Rock house (Commissioner Kepley is trying to turn this into a tourist spot)
- Wilcox Bridge and Civil War battleground (Commissioner Kepley and others are trying to develop this into a tourist spot)
- Richard Childress Racing Museum
- Timberlake Art Gallery

Commissioner Kepley feels that improving US 64 would help to bring tourists to the area. When asked if people in the Lexington area commute to High Point, Commissioner Kepley said that they do, and that he would like to see the County less as a bedroom community, but infrastructure is the limiting factor (i.e. it is costly for supplying sewer in portions of the County due to steep rolling terrain).

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

When asked about any environmental issues in the area, Commissioner Kepley stated that Lexington has bad air quality, although he doesn't understand why it would be worse in Lexington than in Guilford County.

Feedback on Study Options

Commissioner Kepley would like to see improvements made to US 64 based on the needs of commuter traffic, through traffic, and safety.

Commissioner Kepley noted that the portion of US 64 near Mocksville is narrow and winding. Commissioner Kepley recommended widening US 64 or changing it to 4 lanes from Lexington to Asheboro and from Lexington to Mocksville, with priority placed on the section from Lexington to Mocksville. Commissioner Kepley envisions a mixture of access similar to that of the

Pittsboro by-pass with both interchanges and a few intersections. Commissioner Kepley also noted that sometimes a 3-lane roadway with a turn lane can be a good “band-aid” for a roadway.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

TOMMY EMERSON, Chair, Chatham County Board of Commissioners
Siler City

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Emerson feels that US 64 in Chatham County is in the best condition it has been in for years. However, Mr. Emerson indicated that most people drive at high speeds well in excess of the speed limit on US 64 between Siler City and Pittsboro.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Emerson noted that commerce has moved from the "main street" to the "strip" along US 64. The county's main industries are poultry, textiles, and furniture. The county is seeking to expand employment opportunities with higher paying jobs. Mr. Emerson is aware that the Town of Siler City would like to see this as well, as evidenced by the 480+ acres slated for industrial-type development and the Town's plan to provide access to this development via a new roadway connecting the airport to US 421. Access, such as that provided by existing US 64 or an improved US 64, will be an issue for any future economic development endeavors in Chatham County and its municipalities.

Chatham County has a population of approximately 52,000 people. Much of the growth in the county has occurred in about the last 5-10 years, and is concentrated mostly in the northeast and central east part of the county. The county could be classified as a "bedroom community", with people commuting to Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Durham, and Cary for work. Generally, the western section of the county is economically depressed compared to the eastern section where the commuters reside. There is also an increase in retirees to the county overall.

Mr. Emerson predicts overall growth in the county, but "non-uniform" given the variation in demographics and employment trends in different areas of the county. The increase in Hispanic

population within the county can be attributed to the manufacturing jobs that are available in the county.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

Mr. Emerson noted that the Rocky River and endangered species whose habitat is provided by the river would be of importance to many environmentalists in the county and in the Town of Siler City.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about potential impacts of improving US 64 (including a bypass around Siler City), Mr. Emerson indicated that there may be some opposition from residences and businesses on the east side of US 64 (commercial/restaurant and service stations) who benefit from having establishments fronting the corridor.

Mr. Emerson feels that it is logical to upgrade the US 64 corridor in order to take the stress off of the Interstate in the metropolitan areas along I-40 and I-85. Providing this alternative would enable travelers to access these areas better. Mr. Emerson thinks that it makes more sense to improve US 64 through to Lexington (as opposed to the NC 49 option).

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**TALMADGE BAKER, Asheboro City Council/Asheboro-Randolph Chamber of
Commerce
Asheboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Councilman Baker knows that people are using the US 64 corridor as an alternate route to the Interstate. He has mixed feelings about so many people utilizing the corridor as an alternative to the Interstate, as he has noticed the significant increase in traffic on US 64 over the years. He says that people need a "better way" to get through and around the City.

As far as safety, he believes that there are other areas in the City where safety is an issue. This is because when compared to other areas in the City, he says there appears to be a lower number of accidents along the US 64 corridor.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Councilman Baker indicated that growth will continue to occur in the City, particularly in the south and west portions. He also anticipates that there will be much annexation in the coming years. This growth can be attributed to the fact that Asheboro is a "hot spot" due to its location – Asheboro/Randolph County is located in about the center of North Carolina. Mr. Baker sees Asheboro as a major activity center with more commercial/service establishments. Mr. Baker believes that US 64 is the major travel arterial second only to US 73/US 74.

Improvement projects planned in the City include improvements where US 64/NC 49 connect with 73/74 (US 220), but Mr. Baker is not sure of the timing of this project (approximately 5-6 years). A new interchange is planned at 73/74 (US 220) and Salisbury and Sunset Streets.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

Councilman Baker discussed impacts associated with the proposed bypass. These include a historic property, which is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic places. The North Carolina Zoo would have access from the southern bypass.

Environmental resources in the area include the Uwharrie River and possibly listed species. Mr. Baker noted that there are limited number of streams in the Asheboro area, so he doesn't see streams impacts as a major environmental challenge. Mr. Baker's constituents include some Sierra Club members who are active in environmental issues.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about the various alternatives that will be considered during the study, Mr. Baker said that he thinks most people would support a full access control facility. However, he also thinks there will be opposition from some businesses along Dixie Drive (US 64). Mr. Baker perceives a need for corridors, such as US 64, to be improved to an interstate-type facility. This will benefit those traveling to other activity centers, including Raleigh, by avoiding the Interstate (as many do now).

Mr. Bakers feels that US 64 and NC 49 are of about equal in importance, but thinks it makes more sense to improve the US 64 corridor first.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Danny Hearn, President, Statesville Chamber of Commerce
Statesville

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Hearn said that he knew of no safety or mobility concerns to speak of. He did mention that the two lane portion of US 64 from Statesville to Asheboro is not optimal to drive on due to narrow roadway width and lots of traffic. High truck volumes often mean traveling at slower speeds on this portion of US 64.

Mr. Hearn noted that there are no current transportation issues in Statesville. Not too many people use US 64 in the Statesville area. Most of the traffic occurs on the interstates traveling east, west, and south.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Hearn feels that capacity has not been reached on I-40 in this area, but that it will be reached or surpassed in 30 years.

Mr. Hearn noted that a new interchange with I-77 and I-40, including two flyovers, is planned for Statesville (NCDOT TIP Project No. I-3819). This interchange is currently the most dangerous interchange in the area.

Mr. Hearn predicted that north Mecklenburg County and south Iredell County will be growing significantly in the future. Lowe's Corporate Headquarters is being built, which will bring approximately 10,000 jobs to the area. At least 500 suppliers and vendors are projected to move to the area surrounding the new Lowe's Headquarters, creating more jobs and spurring growth.

Mr. Hearn suggested that Jim Arietti, manager of the Lowe's Distribution Center, would be a good person to contact regarding routes that their trucks use for transporting goods.

Mr. Hearn stated that there are several new businesses in the Statesville area. Despite all the new business coming to Statesville, agriculture is still the #1 industry in Statesville. Statesville is trying to encourage more commercial growth, but needs to have more housing available to draw commercial businesses in.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

When asked about any environmental issues in the area, Mr. Hearn stated that the Charlotte area air quality monitoring system, which includes the Statesville area, indicates significant air quality issues for the area.

Feedback on Study Options

Mr. Hearn feels that most people would not switch from using I-40 to US 64. However, Mr. Hearn would like to see US 64 widened from Statesville to Asheboro. He feels that would be a bonus to the Statesville community. Mr. Hearn would support upgrading US 64 to interstate standards. Mr. Hearn feels that most businesses would continue to use I-40, but that widening US 64 to 4 lanes and/or upgrading it to an interstate would be beneficial to businesses in the Statesville area, as it would provide another high speed travel alternative to the existing Interstate.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**ELAINE CHIOSSO, Executive Director, Haw River Assembly
Pittsboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Ms. Chiosso said that Pittsboro has been "battered by road construction". In her opinion, the Pittsboro bypass will encourage development. She noted that the bypass has been successful in taking through traffic, including large trucks, away from downtown with minimal affect on downtown merchants.

Overall, she feels that potential safety issues were alleviated with construction of the bypass. Her safety concerns are with US 15/501, which is being four-laned. She said that the construction detours have been "dangerous".

There is another proposal to connect US 15/501 south with a bypass. The Haw River Assembly is opposed to that project because they are worried it will have similar affects to creeks as did the bypass construction. There were impacts associated with siltation and sedimentation to the top feeder streams of the Robeson Creek watershed.

Generally, there is poor infrastructure in Chatham County, both in utilities and in monitoring for violations. Because of this, outside developers, including some from Florida and California, are offering to provide infrastructure with development approval. Ms. Chiosso noted that this can be frustrating because developers are swaying politicians in their land use/development decisions through big contributions to election campaigns.

Ms. Chiosso acknowledged that people use US 64 and US 421 to reach Greensboro and Charlotte. She noted that US 421 north from US 64 to Greensboro is an underused freeway that provides a high-speed option for people trying to get to Greensboro from the east. Others who might use the US 64 corridor are commuters traveling north to Chapel Hill. Pittsboro is already a bedroom community for people working in Orange County and it is becoming a bedroom community for people who work in Wake County. She also noted that the US 64 corridor is

definitely used for longer distance travel as well. The corridor is also used for recreational travel to Jordan Lake and "game" travel to UNC or at other universities.

Ms. Chiosso isn't sure what the corridor and Pittsboro will be like in the long-term. However, current trends are making many Pittsboro residents unhappy. She definitely thinks that Pittsboro will be bigger and that there will be infill development. Pittsboro has a 35 square mile ETJ. Ms. Chiosso believes that the county needs more financial incentives for better land planning and infrastructure development.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

South of US 64, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) manages the Haw River. North of US 64 to around Bynum, the state just purchased property on both sides of the Haw River. This area is the first land to be purchased through the EEP, and is now known as the Lower Haw River State Natural Area.

Sediment and erosion concerns (potential impacts to the Haw River) will be paramount for any new roadway construction. Ms. Chiosso also indicated that a new causeway over Jordan Lake would be a "fatal flaw". As with the Haw River, there is a concern with construction around Jordan Lake's feeder streams and potential impacts to the overall stream system.

Feedback on Study Options

Ms. Chiosso would like to see an alternative where bicycle paths can be incorporated, particularly in the area from Pittsboro to Raleigh.

In the Pittsboro area, US 64 is "in pretty good shape". Ms. Chiosso does see the importance of the corridor for hurricane evacuation efforts.

Ms. Chiosso would like to see improvements to the existing US 64/US 1 intersection in Wake County.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

FRIAR MICHAEL LORENTSEN, Pastor, Saint Julia Catholic Church
Town of Siler City

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Father Lorentsen has lived in Pittsboro since 1999, and travels the portion between Siler City and Pittsboro almost daily. Father Lorentsen indicated that although there appears to be no apparent mobility problems along the corridor, there is a noticeable increase in the traffic volume since he moved to the area. For example, he says that he and many people often wonder "where the people are coming from". He noted that this increase is apparent when his congregation tries to cross over US 64 when leaving church services.

He is not aware of any safety problems along the corridor, but does know of congregation members who have been involved in accidents on US 64.

Perception of Corridor Conditions

Siler City has a large Hispanic population, many who work in low-paying manufacturing jobs (i.e. Mastercraft Fabrics and Gold Kist) in the Town. Much of the growth in the Town is attributed to the increased in-migration of the Hispanic (Mexican) population. Some of the Hispanic residents come to Siler City (and this country) with the intent of working for money to bring back to their country of origin, but Father Lorentsen indicated that many want to stay in the communities they have established. Father Lorentsen's congregation is 80% Hispanic.

He assumes that most of his congregation utilizes the US 64 corridor for daily activities (travel to work, church, etc.). Much of the Hispanic population in Siler City is concentrated in the north. Many Hispanics also live along US 421 and south of US 64. He also noted that many members of his congregation come from Asheboro, Ramseur, and other adjacent communities. He also noted that there is a large African American population in the Town, mostly in the downtown area.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about potential impacts of improving US 64 (including a bypass around Siler City), Father Lorentsen said he thinks a bypass would probably not negatively impact the Hispanic community from an economic perspective, as he is unaware of any Hispanic-owned businesses in the downtown. However, he noted that there are two very large mobile home parks that are occupied by many Hispanics in the western side of US 64. Given the increase in Hispanic and overall population in Siler City, he feels improvements to the US 64 corridor would help people to an extent. Father Lorentsen provided the name of someone who he considers a Hispanic leader in the community (Hector Legunez of Ramseur). This contact could be key in assisting the study team in the future.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**GEORGE GUSLER, Executive Vice President, Asheboro/Randolph Chamber of Commerce
Asheboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Gusler indicated that some people think that there is too much traffic on US 64. He sees the importance of "keeping" travelers on US 64, but not necessarily those just "passing through". The proposed bypass would probably attract those passing through. He noted that the final corridor for the Asheboro Bypass project has not been identified. The most recent information he was given says it will be Fall 2004 before the preferred corridor is chosen. In the meantime, land development continues to occur in potential bypass locations.

Mr. Gusler noted that the City has implemented some short-term improvements to US 64, including signal synchronization, which he says has helped. The speed limit on US 64 was reduced.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Gusler predicts service and retail growth in Asheboro. Although industrial land uses have had a major presence in Asheboro, he predicts that industrial growth will be limited in the future, and likely to the area around US 220. Mr. Gusler noted that Asheboro is a "hub" with a large industrial base (one of the largest in the state). The North Carolina Zoo and pottery are also major industries in the City of Asheboro.

Similar to Councilman Baker's view, Asheboro's location makes it a hot area for growth. Mr. Gusler noted that many people commute into Raleigh for work.

Mr. Gusler predicts that Ramseur will maintain its small town presence in the long term.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about the various alternatives that will be considered during the study, Mr. Gusler's opinion is that the business community would probably support improving US 64. Preference would likely be given to full control of access.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**Jerry Holder, Vice President of Operations, Klaussner
Asheboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Holder said trucking is crucial to Klaussner, which has approximately 350 trucks a day on US 64 and NC 49. Mr. Holder feels that any improvements done to US 64 from Asheboro to Lexington or to NC 49 from Asheboro to Charlotte would help with the mobility and safety of the Klaussner truckers that use those roads.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Holder noted that Klaussner is the largest workforce in Randolph County, employing approximately 4,000 people in Asheboro. Klaussner is primarily a manufacturing company with some retail. Trucking mobility is crucial to Klaussner, which has a distribution center located off NC 49 and US 220 Business. Mr. Holder feels the US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass will be critical to the Klaussner Distribution Centers and the mobility of their truckers.

Mr. Holder mentioned that the Klaussner Distribution Center on US 220 Business will be expanded by 115,000 square feet. According to Mr. Holder, Klaussner is expected to continue growing in the future.

Asheboro serves as a “bedroom community” to Greensboro, where numerous people commute to work. Mr. Holder noted that Randleman, a small city north of Asheboro, is growing significantly due to its proximity to Greensboro.

Feedback on Study Options

Mobility for Klaussner truckers is Mr. Holder's main concern. Mr. Holder is in favor of any option, including upgrading the US 64/NC 49 corridor to interstate standards, that will decrease travel time for the truckers traveling to and from Klaussner distribution centers.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

KEITH ELKES, Leith Management (Cary Auto Mall)

Cary

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Elkes said there are no problems with safety and mobility to speak of.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Cary is strict as far as development. Cary wants all auto dealerships to be grouped together. Having the dealerships all in one place is beneficial to business.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about the various alternatives that will be considered during the study, Mr. Elkes indicated that the main concern would be denying access, as limiting access to the Auto Mall would have a major negative impact on their business. Mr. Elkes said that the best thing for Leith is direct access from US 64. He noted that 20% of customers are people who say they were just driving by and decided to stop.

Mr. Elkes believes that there is already a disadvantage because of Cary's restrictions (they are only allowed to have one driveway from US 64). Having direct access from US 64 is ideal, but they may support a frontage road if it is directly in front of the business, is easy to use (so you don't pass the auto mall exit), and increases visibility by eliminating the tree buffer.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**Mary Joan Pugh, Business Officer, North Carolina Zoological Park
Asheboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Ms. Pugh noted that US 64 is at capacity now through the Asheboro area. She also noted that US 64 from Asheboro to Lexington needs improvement.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Ms. Pugh mentioned that US 64 is vital to the NC Zoo. Several people visiting the zoo come from both the east and west on US 64. Ms. Pugh said US 220 is vital to the NC Zoo as well. Ms. Pugh feels when the FedEx hub comes to the Piedmont Triad Airport, it will encourage development in the area.

Currently, zoo visitors must travel approximately five miles on Zoo Parkway (NC 159) to reach the zoo entrance. Zoo Parkway has several subdivision entrances and other residential driveways. The residential development on Zoo Parkway, coupled with the five miles that zoo visitors must travel, makes access to the zoo difficult. Approximately 100,000 to 120,000 school children visit the zoo yearly, and navigating the curves on Zoo Parkway is difficult for school buses. Ms. Pugh said that the NC Zoo has been trying to get better access to the zoo since 1985. At the time US 220 Bypass was to be built, the Zoo requested better access off of US 220 Bypass at NC 159. NCDOT turned down the request and moved the US 220 Bypass access to two miles south of NC 159 causing zoo visitors to backtrack to US 159 on an access road. NCDOT told the zoo that the best access would be the Zoo Connector off the US 64 Southern Bypass.

Ms. Pugh explained that input from the NC Zoo has been a part of the planning process of the US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass (NCDOT TIP Project Number R-2536). The US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass is planned to be completed before the planned 4-lane widening of US 64 from Asheboro to Lexington (NCDOT TIP Project Number R-2220). Ms. Pugh thinks that widening

US 64 from Asheboro to Lexington should not be held up waiting for completion of the Asheboro Southern Bypass. For the US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass, Ms. Pugh has informed NCDOT of her opinion that the Zoo Connector off the US 64 Southern Bypass be built at the same time as the US 64 Southern Bypass section from US 220 to NC 159 to prevent forcing four lanes of traffic from the US 64 Bypass onto two lanes of NC 159, which she says will cause a bottleneck effect and force visitors to travel two miles on the current narrow two lane NC 159.

Ms. Pugh told of several updates planned for the zoo over the next 10 years that she expects will bring in 750,000 to one million tourists a year. The updates to the zoo include the following:

- a new Australia exhibit that will open in spring 2004 and continue to Fall 2006
- the elephant/rhino exhibit expansion will be completed in Spring 2006
- updating the temporary zoo simulator to a four-in-one simulator/3D/4D/Large Format theater in next 3 to 5 years
- adding an exhibition hall for catering, traveling exhibits and meeting space in next 3 to 5 years
- converting one of the zoo restaurants into a catering kitchen in next 3 to 5 years
- building a new exhibit (probably Asia) between the two parking lots offering catering and limited specialized lodging in the next five years.

In the future, Ms. Pugh hopes that these planned facilities will result in people coming to visit the NC Zoo making it a two-day trip, whereas currently, visitors only stay one day.

In addition, the zoo supports NCDOT plans to put a visitor center at the rest areas planned for I-73/74 south of Seagrove. Once the zoo has access from the US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass, Ms. Pugh anticipates a third entrance to the zoo off of NC 42 would be needed next.

Feedback on Study Options

Ms. Pugh likes the fact that the US 64 Asheboro Southern Bypass will be an interstate with full control of access. Ms. Pugh would like to see an option where restaurants are accessed by frontage roads through towns along the corridor to prevent the “hamburger alley” situation Asheboro currently has along US 64. Ms. Pugh feels that a divided, four lane roadway with limited access would be a good option. An example of this facility type is US 64 from Asheboro to Ramseur.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Keith Weatherly, Mayor, Town of Apex
Bruce Radford, Town Manager, Town of Apex
Apex

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mayor Weatherly resides along the US 64 corridor and uses it for commuting to/from work daily. Mayor Weatherly is very concerned about the negative impacts that upgrading the roadway would have on existing commercial and residential development along the corridor through the Apex area.

Mayor Weatherly and Mr. Radford stated that Lufkin Tools and EMC2 are the major employers in the Apex area. Manufacturing is the major industry in Apex. These industries use the US 64 corridor.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Radford stated that with the presence of I-540, development is expected and planned in the Apex area. Mr. Radford noted that people traveling on US 64 East will realize they are in an urbanized area once they reach I-540 in Apex and will use I-540 to access various locations in Raleigh.

Over the next 30 years, Mr. Radford and Mayor Weatherly expect to see the limits of Apex expanded to border somewhere around Jordan Lake, with conservative residential development and quality commercial and mixed growth development throughout Apex. They are concerned that access will be diminished because of past NCDOT decisions that denied access for development along US 64.

Mr. Radford and Mayor Weatherly stated that the only area where Apex has room to grow is towards Jordan Lake. They would like to see US 64 within the Apex jurisdiction to keep all

current accesses, and become truly urban with more signalized intersections. They would like for US 64 to become the new central business district for Apex.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

When asked about environmental issues in the Apex area, Mayor Weatherly stated that Apex has been and will continue to be environmentally responsible by having stream buffers in place and protecting Swift Creek and Jordan Lake.

Feedback on Study Options

Mayor Weatherly stated that the elected officials in Apex strongly feel that I-540 is a natural starting point for enhancing mobility along the US 64 corridor. Mayor Weatherly and Mr. Radford are concerned about NCDOT diminishing access along US 64 in the future. They feel it will have a negative impact on the future development of Apex. According to Mr. Radford, most of Apex's citizens use US 64 to live/work/commute. Apex High School is located on Laura Duncan Road, which has a signalized intersection with US 64. Mr. Radford and Mayor Weatherly feel that with subdivisions such as MacGregor and MacGregor West adjacent to US 64, it will be very costly and detrimental to convert US 64 to full control of access in the Apex area. Mr. Radford and Mayor Weatherly suggested that consideration be given to leaving the section of US 64 from I-540 to US 1 as is (with no additional control of access).

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

JOHN GRIMES, Mayor Pro-tem
JOEL BROWER, Town Manager
Town of Siler City

This interview was originally scheduled with Charles Turner, Mayor of the Town of Siler City. Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower attended this interview in place of Mr. Turner.

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Grimes is highly familiar with the corridor, as he traveled the roadway often during his previous experience in the sales profession. Mr. Grimes sees existing safety and mobility issues associated with the slow movement of traffic, few passing opportunities, and lanes that he feels are too narrow in some segments. Particularly in the areas from Asheboro to Lexington, he feels that there needs to be more passing zones.

Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower noted that many people use the corridor as an alternative to the interstate, which is often congested. They believe travel conditions have improved between Siler City and Raleigh, but although there are decreases in travel time, traffic volumes are definitely increasing.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Grimes feels strongly that there will be more commercial traffic on the corridor in the future, including through-traffic from activity centers (i.e. Raleigh and Charlotte). Participants noted that the corridor is heavily used by commuter traffic, the trucking industry, and the locals. They anticipate that truckers, including TRANSPORT INC. out of Concord and OVERNITE will continue to utilize this corridor. Mr. Grimes also noted that since the poultry industry is the "life-blood" in this area, many deliveries will continue to utilize the US 64 corridor. Furniture is also carried through this corridor, as there is an industrial park north of the Town which generates truck traffic. Some distributors come from Atlanta, but many of those will use the interstate.

When asked what the Town is doing to shape recommendations to improve safety and mobility along the corridor, Mr. Brower noted that the Land Development Plan does consider the type of roadway and traffic level in land use decisions. Mr. Brower also noted that they have projects in their *Thoroughfare Plan* that they feel will help alleviate some of the high traffic in the downtown area. One of the projects (R-3325) is a new 2-lane facility from the Siler City airport to US 421. Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower noted that US 421 and US 64 are the most utilized roadways in the Town, and therefore are of the highest priority.

Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower do not perceive a bypass around the Town as negative, per se, but feel strongly about keeping access to US 421, as access will be needed for planned industrial development in the south side of Town. Future development within the Town is likely to be east and south of Siler City. It is anticipated that Siler City will consist mostly of commercial and industrial land uses with residential growth surrounding the Town, with this growth anticipated to reach outside of Town limits (county growth). Water protection areas are located in the north and northeast sections of the Town.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower are not aware of any existing or potential future environmental problems in the corridor. Water quality and endangered species downstream in the Rocky River would likely be issues that constituents, including Friends of the Rocky River, would be concerned about with improvements to the corridor.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about the various alternatives that will be considered during the study, Mr. Grimes indicated that they are concerned with the corridor having so many commercial and residential driveway connections. They would prefer to see a full control access facility with frontage roads if needed, with access to roadways that are vital to the Town (US 421 and US 64). Mr. Grimes and Mr. Brower think that a four-lane roadway with controlled access would alleviate some of the mobility problems along the corridor.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

TROY BARNHARDT, Mayor, Town of Mt. Pleasant

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mayor Barnhardt sees safety issues on NC 49 and North Main Street because school bus routes utilize NC 49. He thinks that crosswalks are needed to ensure kids' safety.

Perception of Corridor Conditions

Mayor Barnhardt indicated that not much growth has occurred in the last few decades in Mt. Pleasant, which has a population of approximately 1300 people. Most of the growth in Cabarrus County has occurred in the western portion, which has experienced tremendous growth due to its proximity to Charlotte. Mayor Barnhardt anticipates that unexpected growth will continue in the County because of the widening of NC 49 and available land.

When asked what he thinks the corridor will be like in the future, he said that he believes that there will be more business development in the area in the next 15+ years. He noted that the Town is looking at annexation opportunities, particularly westward (in the proximity of 73 and the area around the Food Lion).

The Town has a unified development ordinance with an overlay for NC 49. The corridor will likely be a business and retail corridor in the future, as it is already starting to occur. There will be restrictions on the type of structures, access, etc. with this development. He noted that sidewalks (with a buffer from the roadway) will be added, and hopes for an increase in their usage.

The school system is the Town's largest industry. Textile mills also have a strong presence in the Town. In addition, the Town serves as a bedroom community to commuters. Some industry has spilled over from Concord, and is likely to stay in the Town. The Town attracts a variety of

people, including those for weddings, graduation, races, or just passing through. The Town is trying to market existing businesses, including Lowes and the arena.

Mayor Barnhardt noted that there is a great deal of truck traffic using the NC 49 and 73 corridors to get to Albemarle and Troy. Much of this truck traffic is associated with recycling and timber trucks from the Interstate. He said he has seen mixes of truck traffic, except for new car transporting. He especially sees many Cisco foods trucks. He believes I-485 improvements will open up the Town and county to more of a bedroom community.

The Town is encouraging cluster development in their land use plans. He foresees most of the future development along the NC 49 and 73 corridors (wherever water and sewer are in place first). Since developers are offering to build the infrastructure on the south side, that's where he anticipates most development to occur. This type of infrastructure, as well as schools, will drive growth. Mt. Pleasant and Concord have discussed a service area boundary and ETJ so that developers know who to contact to discuss water and sewer. He assumes Concord will get the greater share of growth. They also have agreements on annexation.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

Mt. Pleasant has a historic district. The Town also has a large water treatment plant.

Feedback on Study Options

Mayor Barnhardt sees a potential need for a bypass for truckers 10-15 years from now since 73 goes through Mount Pleasant. He noted that could both "help" and "hurt" the downtown area. He would like to see the corridor preserved, but avoid NC 49 becoming a "trucking line". He sees the 5-laning proposed for NC 49 as encouraging a strip type corridor. He anticipates that vacant properties will build up, and that a bypass would be needed at some point. He indicated that Mt. Pleasant has no *Thoroughfare Plan*, and is somewhat at the mercy of DOT as far as improvements.

Mayor Barnhardt has mixed reactions to upgrading NC 49 to a full access control facility. He anticipates many retailers along NC 49 would not be supportive due to the potential loss of business associated with this alternative. However, he acknowledged that some people would fully support this alternative.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**Michael Sandy, Planning Director, Stanly County Planning/Zoning Department
Albemarle**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Sandy noted the NC 8 intersection with NC 49 is a safety concern. In addition, NC 49 carries a significant amount of truck traffic. Mr. Sandy mentioned that NC 49 is more vital to commuting for people in the northern portion of Stanly County.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

Mr. Sandy noted the current US 52 project in Albemarle would spur development in the area. However, it is unlikely that Albemarle will grow in the direction of NC 49. Mr. Sandy stated people in Albemarle often use NC 24/27 as well as NC 49. In addition, people in the Badin Lake area often use NC 49 to commute to Charlotte. Mr. Sandy feels that traffic on NC 49 appears to be primarily through traffic and US 64/NC 49 are used mostly as alternate routes to I-40/85.

Mr. Sandy mentioned that Asheboro is poised to grow significantly in the future. He also mentioned that golfing facilities located adjacent to NC 49 attract traffic from Charlotte.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

When asked about any environmental issues in Stanly County, Mr. Sandy said the Carolina heelsplitter (an endangered mussel) is located in some portions of Stanly County. Mr. Sandy mentioned that flooding is minimal in Stanly County.

Feedback on Study Options

Mr. Sandy feels that areas should be identified where an interstate would be cheaper to construct than other facility types, and upgrade the existing road to an interstate in those locations. For

towns that US 64 or NC 49 pass through (like Richfield), a bypass facility may be a more cost effective alternative, and potentially could tie in with other roadway projects. Overall, Mr. Sandy feels as though US 64 and NC 49 are important to the entire region and for travel between Charlotte and Raleigh.

Mr. Sandy explained that NC 49 runs through the center of Richfield. The Richfield community would likely not be in favor of upgrading NC 49 to interstate standards. Mr. Sandy said there were several driveway cuts on NC 49 that would need to be considered when choosing a facility type for NC 49. Through Richfield, NC 49 has a 100-foot right-of-way for future widening purposes.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

Richard Poindexter, Chair, Davie County Board of Commissioners
(Terry Bralley, Davie County Manager attending)
Mocksville

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter noted that US 64 is the most dangerous roadway in Davie County. US 64 is used as an industrial corridor in Davie County, with one out of every six vehicles being an 18-wheeler. The land surrounding US 64 in Davie County is primarily rural/agricultural with numerous driveways. Residents and school buses sharing US 64 with 18-wheelers is the cause of numerous accidents along US 64 in Davie County. Mr. Bralley also noted that US 64 is not safe through Mocksville because it is narrow, winding, and has many driveways.

Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter noted that I-40 has safety issues due to congestion and the present construction along portions of I-40, which is significantly used for east-west travel in North Carolina. Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter agree with the idea of looking at US 64/NC 49 as an alternate to I-40. Mr. Bralley said it would act much like a bypass to a congested artery.

Perception of Future Corridor Conditions

According to Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter, Davie County is growing fast, especially in number of residences. They would like to see modest residential growth because of the high cost to provide infrastructure/schools. Their focus is on increased commercial and industrial growth.

Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter said the major employers in the area are Lee Jeans and Jockey International. Lee Jeans ships a third of its product to Mocksville and has approximately 150 trucks a day traveling to Mocksville.

In addition, an industrial park is being developed off of US 601. Mr. Bralley mentioned that there is a good industrial tax base around Mocksville, but areas outside of Mocksville in Davie County are still quite rural.

Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter said that over half of Davie County residents commute outside of the county to work. Mocksville is very much a “bedroom” community (this is somewhat encouraged by the good water system the County has in place). People are moving to Davie County for the increased quality of life and good schools, but are traveling to Winston-Salem to work, eat, and shop.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

When asked about environmental issues/concerns in Davie County, Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter said that Davie County is rich in history. There are three historic districts in Mocksville. They have discussed developing the various historic resources in the area to encourage tourism. However, most of the historic elements in Davie County are located on private property whose owners are not necessarily supportive of this idea. Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter hope that as these properties develop, they will be able to maintain the historic elements of the properties.

Feedback on Study Options

Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter feel that US 64 is a critical alternative to I-85 and I-40, and that improvements to US 64 will be very important to Mocksville to improve safety and to drive economic development in the area. Mr. Bralley and Mr. Poindexter believe the US 64 corridor should be improved to interstate standards, and would not support a facility with numerous driveways and signalized intersections that promote stop and go traffic. They both feel that "nothing but good can come from improving US 64 to interstate standards in Davie County."

Mr. Bralley mentioned that the new location Mocksville Bypass is on the TIP as Project Number R-3111.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**ROBERT PORTER, Chair, Orange-Chatham Group Sierra Club
Chapel Hill**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Porter thinks that US 64 and US 15/501 improvements are a "catalyst" for sprawl. He feels that wider roads make communities less safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. He believes the Interstate is fine as it is, and that promoting tourism isn't helped by widening roads. Widening the roads makes the rural areas look just like everywhere else and robs these areas of their character.

He feels the existing corridor is sufficient with the exception of minor safety improvements that can be implemented (for example adding turning lanes at strategic locations). He feels that roads need to be "links" to more compact activity centers. If necessary, he thinks that land should be purchased and preserved along both sides of the US 64 corridor and be used only for farmland, as this may eliminate future sprawl. Purchasing development rights is another option he referred to.

Access control along US 64 could help control development of land that is a long distance from a town center, particularly if there is a buffer area purchased along both sides of the roadway, as described above.

Perception of Corridor Conditions

Mr. Porter says that current land use planning trends need to be changed, and that more attention should be given to "smart growth" planning. For example, Mr. Porters feels that development should be mixed, including provisions for affordable housing. He would like to see access/development encouraged within existing city centers and a movement away from sprawling development.

Feedback on Study Options

Mr. Porter is opposed to anything other than minor improvements, such as turn lanes, where appropriate. Mr. Porter believes that we have to remember that it's not only expensive to build highways, but that it's costly over the long run to maintain them. He says "purchasing development rights along sections of the corridor (likely to be otherwise consumed by sprawl) will ultimately cost less than building infrastructure to accommodate sprawl, and will serve to protect our state's natural beauty at the same time."

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

TOM HORNER, District Ranger, Uwharrie National Forest
Troy

Feedback on Corridor Conditions/Study Options

Mr. Horner indicated that he agrees with the concepts and ideas expressed by Bill Medlin (Director of the Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project).

A relatively small portion of the NC 49 corridor actually borders the Uwharrie National Forest, which is approximately 50,000 acres in total. Mr. Horner noted that although most maps show the Uwharrie National Forest as a continuous mass, it is actually fragmented because efforts to purchase and restore all of the forested land in the 1930s were impeded by unwilling sellers. There is a "proclamation boundary" for the Uwharrie National Forest, which also includes privately owned lands. The National Forest is legally permitted to manage only the public lands within this boundary.

A line item budget of \$500,000 has been requested from Congress to secure lands that will provide a connection of the forest north to the Birkhead Mountains Wilderness area.

The Uwharrie National Forest is managed with goals typical of most national forest lands – habitat enhancement, logging, recreation, and water resource management (the exception is grazing). Mr. Horner anticipates an increase in visitors to the forest in the future. This is due to the fact that it is uniquely situated within a 2 hour drive from most major population centers in North Carolina. Recreational use is growing, especially in the Badin Lake area and on the 20-mile Uwharrie National Recreation Trail.

Mr. Horner anticipates that this increase in visitors will play a big role in the economic development for the area, and will support tourism efforts for the region. As expressed by Mr. Medlin, he would like to see "access" to the region improved, but with minimal effect on the forestland/environment.

There are endangered species within the National Forest. One such plant species, the *Schweinitz sunflower*, is likely adjacent to the NC 49 corridor. The forest is abundant with wildlife, including deer, turkey, bald eagles, and probably mountain lions. The forest also has unique habitat pockets, including upland bogs and prairie.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

**TONY TUCKER, Director, Chatham County Economic Development Corporation
Pittsboro**

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Tucker is pleased that the bypass was constructed and feels that businesses have generally supported the roadway project and have not suffered since its construction. (There has definitely been a reduction in heavy truck traffic, but other than that, he doesn't see impacts from the bypass.) He feels that the bypass is generally safe and that US 64 is perceived as a pretty road in the Pittsboro area.

Mr. Tucker said that the signalized intersections going east towards Raleigh "slow things down". He wants to see fully controlled access on the entire corridor. He says this will enhance speed, making it better for people to get to and from Chatham County, and would allow for better flow of goods and services.

Perception of Corridor Conditions

Mr. Tucker noted that lots of travelers utilize the US 64 corridor, including those that use it as an alternative to I-40. He said people are also coming to Pittsboro via US 64.

Biolex is a big employer in Pittsboro. Poultry processing plants also are located in the Pittsboro area and Siler City. 3M materials processing plant is three miles south of Pittsboro on US 15/501. Pittsboro continues to grow as a bedroom community to Wake and Orange counties.

He anticipates lots of residential growth for the county, and sees this as a positive change because better housing stock can help attract new businesses and more variety of retail establishments. There will be an increase in retirees/seniors moving to the area, but not dramatic.

In his opinion, less expensive housing in Chatham County will attract those who work in Orange County. He noted that infrastructure is the limiting factor for residential and commercial growth in the county. He believes US 64 improvements have been a direct catalyst for growth occurring now and feels that since growth will occur, it makes sense to try to do something to "make it better". Improvements to US 15/501 will be even more influential for growth.

Businesses want to be close to the airport and Interstate although having better western access/mobility will help.

The area east of Pittsboro has soils with poor percolation. This is a hindrance to certain types of development. He anticipates that new developments will be compact with provisions for open space. Development is, and likely will remain, east of US 15/501, since this is the area closest to the activity centers of Orange and Wake Counties.

He said that the only problem area along US 64 is Siler City.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

There is an organized coalition against water reservoir expansion in the Siler City area (Friends of the Rocky River). Water and waste water expansion is a big hindrance to growth, and there isn't much action being taken now to change this.

Feedback on Study Options

Mr. Tucker strongly supports a controlled access highway from Raleigh to Charlotte.

US 64 – NC 49 Corridor Study
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

TYREL MOORE, Chair, Planning Board
Town of Harrisburg

Feedback on Corridor Conditions

Safety and Mobility

Mr. Moore indicated that there is a tremendous amount of truck traffic on the corridor. There is also a great deal of daily regional commuter traffic using the NC 49 corridor. Mr. Moore said that NC 49 is "the backbone of the Town".

Mr. Moore noted that the Town adopted and implemented a Highway 49 corridor overlay district in 2001 to provide design guidelines that would reduce "spatial fragmentation" and to bring some "central shape" and "cohesion" to land uses along the corridor. He noted that the corridor is vital to access and that the development community struggles with corridor decisions. There is a big push to coordinate land use and transportation along this corridor since NC 49 is the "spine" through Harrisburg. There is a huge concern with backups at the Roberta Road intersection (NC 49 will be 5 lanes in this area when construction is completed). The improvements to NC 49 and Roberta Road are critical to a realization of the Town's vision for the Town Center, and especially critical to the economic success of the project. At present, NCDOT's completion of this transportation project easily is the single most important planning issue for the NC 49 Corridor in Harrisburg.

He said that the planning board has discussed better pedestrian access for NC 49 and a sidewalk plan has been considered. Overall, widening of the NC 49 corridor during occurring development has been challenging for the Town. Mr. Moore indicated that the Town is a bedroom community with a "hodge podge" of land uses on the corridor through the Town to the Mecklenburg County line and I-485. The Town Council and the Planning and Zoning Board have spent considerable time formulating planning policies and do not want the corridor to operate or look like US 74.

Perception of Corridor Conditions

Mr. Moore sees a rise in neo-traditional development (i.e. the Town Center) for Harrisburg in the next few decades. Realizing transit plans stop at the speedway, the Town hopes to eventually see a connection to Mecklenburg's transit initiatives in the future. The Town has no bus or transit planning at this time. In the future the Town would like to attract major industries, such as a Chicago business that recently inquired about relocating to the area. For a small town, Harrisburg has a number of active industrial sites and enjoys a favorable tax base.

Mr. Moore sees the importance of regional cooperation with land use. For example, a substantial portion of Harrisburg's growth has occurred through voluntary annexations of existing and new residential developments. These areas have been located mostly on the south side of NC 49 and have been developed with density and subdivision requirements that differ from those of the Town. Better communication with planning decisions in adjacent areas should be encouraged. The Town shares jurisdictional boundaries with Charlotte and Concord as well as Cabarrus and Mecklenburg counties. Harrisburg is part of the Rowan/Cabarrus MPO, but he believes that realistically, Harrisburg should be part of MUMPO given its proximity to Mecklenburg County, its access to I-485, and its functional connection with the rapidly growing the University City area.

Environmental Concerns/Challenges

Environmental challenges are generally limited to potential hazardous sites, including Galvan Industries, which is believed to be a pollution source.

Feedback on Study Options

When asked about the various study options, including a bypass alternative, Mr. Moore indicated that at one point there was a "bypass" in a previous *Thoroughfare Plan*. Town Administrator, Carl Parmer, confirmed that there was a northern and southern bypass on the *Plan* from about the mid1990s, but they never were given the priority that would lead to their construction.

Mr. Moore said that a bypass alternative around Harrisburg could be an improvement because it could help encourage the cohesion and quality they are trying to maintain on the NC 49 corridor. He feels that with this alternative, traffic issues may shift outside of Town. He does acknowledge that some people would disagree with seeing a bypass due to the potential loss of

business associated with this option. On the other hand, improved circulation via the re-routing of truck traffic would create better access to businesses on the NC 49 corridor.